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ABSTRACT

This interim report on the Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) program in New York City: (1) describes strategies offered by 32 districts that provide program alternatives to special education referrals; (2) elucidates the strengths and weaknesses of program designs and highlights factors having positive effects on at-risk children; (3) discusses selection procedures for program participation and services designed for children referred to PASE; and (4) reports preliminary analyses of changes in initial school referral rates from 1984-85 to 1985-86. Data gathered from 62 elementary and 19 middle schools visited between December 1985 and March 1986 illustrate such positive program factors as high-quality staff, supportive district and administrative leadership, program designs sensitive to local needs and resources, and focus on the individual child. Program limitations included restrictive selection of target population, exclusion of some elementary schools from the program, staff vacancies, large caseloads, and inadequate staff development. Recommendations involve improved and broadened student selection, improved funding and structure of program administration, more training for and recruitment of staff, and provision of more services (counseling, diagnostic testing, etc.) for PASE students. (CB)

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INTERIM REPORT ON 1985-86
PROGRAM ALTERNATIVES TO
SPECIAL EDUCATION

OEA Evaluation Report

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O.E.A. EVALUATION REPORT
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April, 1986

INTERIM REPORT ON 1985-86 PROGRAM ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Producing in a short time a report the size of this one required substantial efforts by many people. It would not have been possible without Milt Chaikin's ability to plan and coordinate the evaluation; this report is testimony to his diligence and hard work. He was ably supported by Susan Green, Mildred Berkey, and Rosemary Durant-Giles. Together, the four of them made many site visits, conducted interviews, and wrote the district reports under severe time and space constraints. William Hilton, with Tony Godfrey's assistance, was responsible for preparing the O.E.A. roster and special education referral data for analysis and for interpreting the findings. Joan Katz helped edit the final draft of the report. Thanks are due to Steve Meyers and Joanne Lund of the Division of Special Education for making their referral information available to us in a timely fashion. Finally, recognition must be made of Lucy Krolian's long hours spent typing several drafts of this report. She was assisted by Sheila Moore, Gladys Rosa, and Bea Lerner.

A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

BACKGROUND

In 1985-86, the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) distributed nine million dollars in city tax-levy and state P.S.E.N. (Pupils with Special Education Needs) funds among the 32 New York City community school districts to permit districts to expand, modify, or develop Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) for students considered at risk of referral to special education. The overall goal of PASE is to reduce the numbers of students referred inappropriately to special education, by providing support to the regular education program. To this end, districts were provided funds to develop compensatory education and related service programs for students who, without such support, would likely be referred to School-Based-Support Teams (S.B.S.T.) or district Committees on the Handicapped (C.O.H.) for assessment and possible placement in a special education class.

This report on the PASE program is one of two that the Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) was asked by D.S.E. to prepare in 1985-86. This first report has four objectives:

- to describe approaches and strategies offered by districts that provide program alternatives to special education referrals;
- to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of different program designs and to highlight factors that appear to have a positive impact on at-risk children;
- to indicate how and why students were selected for participation in the program and to describe services that have been designed for children referred to PASE; and
- to report preliminary analyses of changes in initial school referral rates from 1984-85 to 1985-86.

To examine these issues, data were gathered at 62 elementary and 19 middle schools (at least two schools in each district) visited between December, 1985 and March, 1986. Rates of initial special education referrals in PASE schools were obtained from the Office of Management Services of D.S.E., based on monthly reports submitted by district C.O.H. chairpersons. Also, O.E.A. developed a roster on which PASE staff included the names of all of the students who had been referred to the program by December, 1985. This database has been used to draw a random sample of students for a student impact survey; analyses of survey data and academic achievement will be the focus of the final O.E.A. report.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Most districts offered PASE activities similar to those provided in 1984-85. These can be grouped into three models: a largely guidance approach (12 districts); the provision of an instructional program; (seven districts); and the development of a combined guidance and instructional program (13 districts). Within each of these three models, districts varied in their objectives, curriculum, instructional materials, staff development, and parent education and outreach.

CHANGES IN SCHOOL REFERRAL RATES

The rate of referral decreased in 25 districts, remained the same in one, and increased in the other seven. Staff in PASE schools made a total of 4,876 referrals from September, 1985 to February, 1986. This represents a net decrease of 1,024 referrals from the 5,900 made during the same period the prior school year. In other words, there were 17.4 percent fewer referrals in 1985-86 than in 1984-85. The decrease in referrals in schools new to the program was twice that of schools participating for a second year.

POSITIVE FACTORS

Four general factors were evident in districts that reported success with the PASE students. These are: high-quality staff, supportive leadership from the district and school administration, program designs that were sensitive to local needs and resources, and a focus on the individual child.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS

The use of the P.S.E.N. academic requirement was too restrictive, according to many PASE staff and principals. D.S.E. program guidelines clearly indicated that districts were to target elementary schools for PASE; however, ten districts included all or some of their middle schools in PASE. Staff vacancies were reported in nearly one-half of the districts. Target populations in some districts were too large for the assigned PASE staff. Staff development was absent or inadequate in six districts, often because the district made little or no effort to provide it. Principals in four of the seven districts that focus exclusively on instruction reported that many PASE students need guidance and counseling. The multiple roles of most district liaisons limited the time they could devote to PASE activities. Work and storage space were a serious impediment to program operations in at least five districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- District PASE funds should be provided as two separate allocations: a P.S.E.N. allocation, for providing services for P.S.E.N.-eligible students; and a tax-levy allocation, for providing services to students regardless of P.S.E.N. eligibility.
- Districts serving only middle schools should consider targeting elementary school at-risk students.
- In districts where the district liaison is responsible for multiple programs (especially true when the director of funded programs is the liaison), a program coordinator should be assigned on at least a half-time basis.
- Staff members' interest in working in PASE next year should be determined before the close of the school year.
- The use of part-time staff who have other responsibilities competing for their time should be minimized, except when integral to a successful program model (e.g., an after-school program).
- Split and itinerant assignments should be discouraged.
- Training should be provided to program staff.
- Staff caseloads should not be excessive.
- PASE coordinators and staff should redouble their efforts to coordinate existing services with other district support programs, resource staff, and community agencies.
- Guidance should be available to all PASE students, especially those for whom academic difficulties were only one of the reasons for referral.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Evaluation Issues and Procedures	3
	Overview of the Report	4
II.	PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION	6
	Selection of Participants	6
	Program Staffing	13
	Program Activities	17
	Parent Involvement and Utilization of Community Resources	27
	Coordination and Supervision of Program Activites	29
III.	CHANGES IN REFERRALS, AND PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PASE	31
	Changes in School Referral Rates	31
	The Perceived Impact of PASE	35
IV.	CONCLUSIONS	36
	Positive Factors	36
	Program Limitations	40
	Recommendations	43
APPENDIX:	Reports on Community School Districts' Program Alternatives to Special Education	46

LIST OF TABLES

		PAGE
TABLE 1:	Students Referred to 1985-86 Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE)	7
TABLE 2:	Participation of Students by Grade and School Level	9
TABLE 3:	Reasons for Referring Students to PASE	12
TABLE 4:	Program Staffing	14
TABLE 5:	District PASE Models in 1984-85 and 1985-86	18
TABLE 6:	Services Planned for PASE Students	20
TABLE 7:	Observations of PASE Group Guidance Sessions	21
TABLE 8:	Observations of PASE Instructional Sessions	25
TABLE 9:	Initial S.B.S.T./C.O.H. Referrals Made by Staff in PASE Schools, in 1984-85 and 1985-86	32
TABLE 10:	Comparison of Referrals in Old and New PASE Schools	34

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 1984-85, the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) distributed seven million dollars in city tax-levy and state P.S.E.N. (Pupils with Special Education Needs) funds among the 32 New York City community school districts (C.S.D.'s) to develop Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) for students considered at risk of referral to special education. In 1985-86, the total allocation was increased to nine million dollars, to permit the districts to expand, modify, or develop additional alternative programs.

The overall goal of PASE is to reduce the numbers of students referred inappropriately to special education, by providing support to the regular education program. To this end, districts were provided funds to develop compensatory education and related service programs for students who, without such support, were likely to be referred to School-Based-Support Teams (S.B.S.T.) or district Committees on the Handicapped (C.O.H.) for assessment and possible placement in a special education class.

PASE is based on the rationale that, for many students referred to special education, alternative services in a general education setting are preferable for the following reasons:

1. Alternative services avoid the stigmatization of a handicapped classification and special education placement.
2. PASE children and their parents more readily accept PASE than special education placement.

3. PASE operates in an integrated setting in contrast to the physical segregation of special education classes.

4. PASE programs maintain children in their neighborhood schools whereas special education often involves bussing to unfamiliar neighborhoods.

District allocations ranged from $183,000 to $448,000, based upon a formula established in 1984-85. Forty percent of the allocation depended on the district's enrollment. Sixty percent was based on the district's public school referral rate; districts with 1984-85 referral rates lower than the city-wide mean referral rate received higher than average allotments.

To receive their allocation, districts were required to submit a proposal, as part of their Comprehensive Compensatory Education Plan which details the use of Chapter I and P.S.E.N. funds. D.S.E. guidelines allowed districts the flexibility to develop alternative programs that reflect local needs and utilize available resources. Students eligible for the program were those below P.S.E.N. eligibility criteria. Students in the second through ninth grades were eligible if their reading or mathematics scores on standardized city-wide tests were at or below the 24th percentile. Kindergarten and first-grade children were selected by district-specified criteria, including readiness tests, checklists, and school work. P.S.E.N.-eligible students selected for PASE are supposed to be those considered at risk of referral to special education.

EVALUATION ISSUES AND PROCEDURES

Purpose of the Evaluation

This report on the PASE program is one of two that the Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) was asked by D.S.E. to prepare in 1985-86.* This first report has four objectives:

- to describe approaches and strategies offered by districts that provide program alternatives to special education referrals;
- to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of different program designs and to highlight factors that appear to have a positive impact on at-risk children;
- to indicate how and why students were selected for participation in the program and to describe services that have been designed for children referred to PASE; and
- to report preliminary analyses of changes in initial school referral rates from 1984-85 to 1985-86.

Evaluation Procedures

Data to examine these issues were collected through several procedures. District applications were reviewed to determine why sites were chosen and which students would be selected. Evaluation instruments first used in 1984-85 were revised to include student interviews and to accommodate changes in student eligibility guidelines. Implementation data were gathered at 62 elementary and 19 middle schools (at least two schools in each district) visited between December, 1985 and March, 1986. O.E.A. evaluators observed program activities and interviewed a total of 106 program staff, 79 school administrators, and all 32 district liaisons. Sixty sites new to PASE in 1985-86, and 20 sites visited last year for evaluation of the 1984-85 program, were chosen at random to constitute a representative sample of the 351 schools

*The final report is expected to be available in September, 1986.

that participate in PASE. District and PASE rates of initial special education referrals were obtained from the Office of Management Services of D.S.E., based on monthly reports submitted by district C.O.H. chairpersons. (Referral data for a few schools were obtained directly by O.E.A. from C.O.H. chairpersons, since school-level data has been maintained by D.S.E. only since March, 1985).

O.E.A. developed a roster, the List of Students Referred to PASE, on which PASE staff included the names of all of the students who had been referred to their program by December, 1985. This roster was designed to provide baseline data on the target population, including the number of students in the school, the reasons for their selection, and the services planned for them. This database has been used to draw a random sample of 25 percent of students for inclusion in a student impact survey; analyses of survey data (provided by staff who referred students to the program) and achievement will be the focus of the final report on the 1985-86 O.E.A. report. In addition, the database will be used to follow PASE students longitudinally to determine the long-range impact of program services on subsequent referrals to special education.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Chapter II reviews the overall implementation of PASE. Topics include: selection of target sites and grade-level focus; identification and selection of target students; program staffing and activities; preparation, training, and involvement of PASE and non-PASE staff; parent involvement and utilization of community resources; and coordination and supervision of program activities. Chapter III presents preliminary

analyses of changes in referral rates from 1984-85 to 1985-86. Chapter IV presents conclusions about the impact of PASE and makes specific recommendations about the continuation of the program in 1986-87.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Target Schools

Half (16) of the districts indicated that the primary reason schools were included in PASE was that they had high rates of referral to special education. Eight other districts did not specifically target schools; rather, they included all of their elementary schools (seven districts) or every school (one district). The remaining eight districts gave as their predominant reason for including a school one or more of the following: large numbers of suspensions and/or behavior problems; a high incidence of reading and mathematics deficiencies; large school registers; interested principal; and availability of work space for the PASE staff.

The number of sites that districts selected for PASE ranged from a low of two schools in C.S.D. 23 to a high of 26 in C.S.D. 10. (See Table 1.) A total of 351 schools (302 elementary and 49 middle schools) participated in PASE in 1985-86, compared to 331 schools (291 elementary and 40 middle schools) in 1984-85. Eighty of the 1985-86 schools were new to PASE in 1985-86; the others were in the program for a second year.

Number of Participants

The number of students who participated in PASE was determined in two ways. First, students referred to the program by December, 1985 were listed on the O.E.A. roster.* Second, district liaisons were

* This roster will be updated in May, 1986 to determine the size of the full PASE student population.

TABLE 1

Students Referred to 1985-86
Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE)

District	Number of Schools in Program	Participating Students[a]		
		Number on O.E.A. Roster	Additional Students Reported to be Participating	Total
1	18	344	31	375
2	10	121	119	240
3	6	41	34	75
4	3	88	1	89
5	3	123	0	123
6	5	178	0	178
7	8	198	2	200
8	7	65	0	65
9	4	51	9	60
10	26	426	74	500
11	11	254	26	280
12	4	119	0	119
13[b]	6	16	3,484	3,500
14	4	310	90	400
15	7	225	0	225
16	13	203	24	227
17	22	818	232	1,050
18	8	222	21	243
19	4	138	12	150
20	22	395	1	396
21	6	281	19	300
22	9	719	0	719
23	2	57	48	105
24	8	175	25	200
25	22	228	22	250
26	24	654	0	654
27	18	1,408	0	1,408
28	14	255	0	255
29	23	227	233	460
30	15	187	13	200
31	7	702	0	702
32	12	127	123	250
Total	351	9,355	4,643	13,998

[a] The number of students on roster are those who were referred by December, 1985 and who appear on the O.E.A. roster. Additional participants were reported by district liaisons (at the time of the O.E.A. site visit) to be in the program; however, their names were not on the roster.

[b] The substantial discrepancy in this district between the number of students on roster and the additional students participating resulted because, according to the district liaison, all students in the PASE schools are considered participants in the program. However, the names of only 16 students were provided to O.E.A.

-7-

site visits how many students had been included in the program. As displayed in Table 1, a total of 13,998 students have been identified for this program (9,355 listed on the O.E.A. roster, and an additional 4,643 noted by district liaisons).* District target populations ranged from a low of 61 students in C.S.D. 9 to 3,500 in C.S.D. 13.

Districts with especially large target populations typically provide extended but diffused services. C.S.D. 17, for example, created an after-school program in 22 schools which is staffed by part-time per-session staff. C.S.D. 27 hired many part-time counselors who have large, changing caseloads. Districts with smaller target populations generally serve fewer schools and provide self-contained or pull-out instruction in small-register classes (as in C.S.D.'s 8 and 9).

Grade-Level Focus

D.S.E. guidelines recommended that the program emphasize elementary school students. Eighteen of the 32 districts focused exclusively on students in the elementary grades, kindergarten through grade six. Ten districts included both elementary and middle school students, and the other four districts focused exclusively on their middle school population.

Analyses of the PASE student database reveal that more than three-quarters of the students on roster (7,256, or 78.3 percent) are in elementary schools. (See Table 2.) The largest concentration of these students is in grades one through four (59.3 percent).

*It should be noted that this may be an overestimation, since C.S.D. 13 reported that all students in PASE schools, a total of 3,500, participate in the program.

TABLE 2

Participation of Students by Grade and School Level

	School Level			
	Elementary	Middle	Total	
Grade	n	n	n	(%)
Kindergarten	334	-	334	(3.6)
1	1,421	-	1,421	(15.3)
2	1,478	-	1,478	(15.9)
3	1,258	-	1,258	(13.6)
4	1,340	-	1,340	(14.5)
5	908	-	908	(9.8)
6	517	332	849	(9.2)
7	-	833	833	(9.0)
8	-	644	644	(6.9)
9	-	201	201	(2.2)
Total	7,256	2,010	9,266	(100.0)

NOTE: These 9,266 students appeared on the O.E.A. roster. An additional 89 were on the roster, but their grades were not indicated.

Reasons for Referral

Most PASE students were reported to have low academic achievement. In 24 districts, district liaisons reported stricter adherence to P.S.E.N. guidelines than in 1984-85. As a result, students had to have low reading or mathematics scores to be included in PASE. In the 14 of these districts which provide instruction (often in conjunction with guidance), staff reported that use of the P.S.E.N. guideline was appropriate. However, the other ten of these districts provided only guidance. For these latter districts, rigid adherence to the academic P.S.E.N. requirement probably denied services to many truly at-risk students. In districts which required P.S.E.N. eligibility, other student characteristics (in addition to academic difficulties) were: inappropriate behavior (18 districts), poor adjustment to school (11 districts), poor attendance (11 districts), and poor peer relations (five districts).

Eight districts reported that not all identified at-risk students were P.S.E.N.-eligible. With few exceptions (e.g., in-school suspension programs) the majority of PASE students in these districts met the academic requirements of P.S.E.N. In addition, many students in these districts were characterized by one or more of the following: poor adjustment to school (four districts), poor peer relations (three districts), inappropriate behavior (three districts), general academic difficulties (two districts), holdovers (two districts), and poor attendance (two districts).

In addition to asking district liaisons to describe the characteristics of targeted students, analyses were also performed on the O.E.A. roster. More than half (53.2 percent) of the students were referred for two or more reasons. Consistent with districts' reported adherence to P.S.E.N. eligibility criteria, a majority of students were referred because of reading deficiencies (63.2 percent). (See Table 3.) Many also had general learning problems (41.3 percent) in addition to (or instead of) reading problems; behavior problems (29.8 percent); and poor achievement in mathematics (28.4 percent). Other reasons for referral were indicated, but with less frequency.

Referral Procedure

Most students were referred to PASE by school personnel: classroom teachers, principals, grade supervisors, or school guidance counselors. The referral process, however, was not uniform across districts and even differed within some districts. Lists of P.S.E.N.-eligible children served as the basis for organizing PASE classes in some districts. Children from the slowest classes of particular grades were screened for learning problems in several districts. Two districts referred children for disruptive and/or aggressive behavior, as an alternative to suspension.

Final decisions about placing students in PASE were arrived at jointly in most districts by PASE and non-PASE staff. The latter included guidance counselors, supervisors, classroom teachers, S.B.S.T. members, and Chapter I teachers. One district required approval from the district liaison, while others asked for parents' permission.

TABLE 3

Reasons for Referring Students to PASE

Reason for Referral	Number of Students for whom Reason for Selection was Indicated (N = 9,266)[a]	
	n	(%)[b]
Reading deficiencies	5,860	(63.2)
Learning problems	3,831	(41.3)
Behavior problems	2,758	(29.8)
Mathematics deficiencies	2,629	(28.4)
Home problems	743	(8.0)
Limited English proficiency (LEP)	723	(7.8)
Attendance problems	716	(7.7)
Other problems	430	(4.6)
Health problems	283	(3.1)

[a] Students were referred for the following number of reasons: 4,332 (46.8 percent) - one reason; 2,424 (26.2 percent) - two reasons; 1,568 (16.9 percent) - three reasons; and 942 (10.2 percent) - four or more reasons. The reason for referral of the other 89 students on the O.E.A. roster was unspecified.

[b] Percentages do not total 100 because students may be referred for more than one reason.

PROGRAM STAFFING

Numbers of Program Staff

A total of 389 program staff are assigned to the 351 PASE sites or their district office. The number of staff members ranges from a low of three in C.S.D. 3, to a high of 70 in C.S.D. 17. (See Table 4.) Variations in the number and type of PASE staff across the districts were the result of several factors: existing district resources, priorities, and needs; type of program or service; amount of staff time (i.e., part- or full-time); and the scope of their program and non-program responsibilities.

Organization of Staff

The following examples illustrate some of the different ways districts structured the PASE staff. In C.S.D. 7, for example, an itinerent team composed of two teacher trainers, a parent educator, and a family worker provides comprehensive, intensive, short-term (18-week) interventions. PASE services in this district focused on enhancing the classroom management and teaching skills of selected mainstream teachers and building positive home-school relationships with the parents of the PASE students in these classes. C.S.D. 30 also provides services on a cyclical basis (seven weeks each). Its team is composed of two teachers, a guidance counselor, and a paraprofessional. Direct intensive remedial services are given to small groups of students, and individual counseling is provided to selected children who have social or emotional problems.

Another staffing arrangement, exemplified by C.S.D. 18, consists of a full-time project coordinator, eight part-time guidance counselors,

TABLE 4

Program Staffing

District	Number of Staff	Staff Positions
1	23	Guidance Counselors (23)
2	7	Teachers (7)
3	3	District Liaison/G.C. (1) Guidance Counselors (2)
4	6	Teachers (6)
5	6	Social Worker (1) Teachers (5)
6	10	Teachers (5) Community Associates (5)
7	4	Teacher Trainers (2) Parent Educator (1) Family Assistant (1)
8	12	Teachers (6) Paraprofessionals (6)
9	9	Teachers (4) Educational Assistants (4) Program Coordinator (1)
10	25	District Liaison (1) Guidance Counselors (24)
11	14	Guidance Counselors (12) Teacher Trainer (1) Teachers (1)
12	5	District Liaison (1) Teachers (4)
13	8	Teacher Coordinator (8)
14	10	Guidance Counselors (2) Teachers (6) Family Workers (2)
15	8	Guidance Counselor (1) Family Workers (3) Educational Assistant (1) Teachers (3)
16	7	Guidance Counselors(5) Neighborhood Worker (1) District Liaison (1)
17	70	Guidance Counselors (3) Teachers (38) Paraprofessionals (26) Teacher Trainers (2) Supervisors (1)
18	15	District Liaison (1) Program Coordinator (1) Guidance Counselors (9) Paraprofessionals (3) Neighborhood Worker (1)
19	10	Teachers (8) Social Worker (1) Guidance Counselor (1)
20	16	Guidance Counselors (16)
21	4	Teachers (3) District Liaison (1)
22	6	Guidance Counselors (6)
23	4	Teachers (2) Paraprofessionals (2)
24	6	District Liaison (1) Teachers (5)
25	26	Teachers (22) Educational Assistants (4)
26	23	Teachers (23)
27	15	Guidance Counselors (15)
28	8	Guidance Counselors (8)
29	6	District Liaison (1) Guidance Counselors (5)
30	6	Teachers (2) Guidance Counselors (2) Paraprofessional (1) District Liaison (1)
31	8	Guidance Counselors(7) School Liaison (1)
32	6	Teachers (4) Family Assistant (1) District Liaison/ School Psychologist (1)

NOTE: Some of the staff listed above have part-time PASE assignments. The district liaisons in three districts are full-time PASE-funded (C.S.D. 16, 18, and 32). All other district liaisons listed here are funded part-time by PASE.

three paraprofessionals, and a neighborhood worker. PASE staff in this district provide daily remediation in reading and mathematics to small groups of children in eight schools, under the supervision of non-PASE teachers. Small-group guidance and individual counseling is arranged for students who need such support.

A third staffing pattern, common in programs that emphasize instruction, is illustrated by C.S.D. 26. There, 23 part-time PASE teachers are assigned to 24 schools to provide small-group instruction in language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). C.S.D. 17 employs 38 teachers and 26 paraprofessionals on a per-session basis in its after-school reading program.

Some districts provided substantial additional support to PASE through non-PASE school personnel or district staff. For example, tax-levy guidance counselors in C.S.D. 16 provide services to PASE students in the six elementary schools not served by PASE counselors. The paraprofessional in C.S.D. 19, trained in Distar, assists PASE teachers with its implementation. The director of pupil personnel services in C.S.D. 11, in cooperation with the district liaison, provides in-service training and supervision of PASE staff.

Preparation, Training, and Involvement of PASE and Non-PASE Staff

Orientation. PASE staff in 28 districts were given an orientation to the program, usually by the district liaison. This consisted, in some districts, of a brief, two-hour session; one district provided for three full days of staff preparation. Topics covered in these sessions included program goals, identification of the at-risk population,

staff responsibilities, curriculum, and program materials. Non-PASE staff were given an orientation to PASE in fewer than half of the districts. Since PASE in 1985-86 is no longer a new program, orientation of non-PASE staff was often felt to be unnecessary. Most of the orientations were held early in the school year during a school-wide faculty conference. The typical agenda included a brief description of PASE and its objectives, plus guidelines for selecting and referring students to the program.

Staff Development. Staff development activities are provided in 26 districts, although these vary in the amount of time allocated and topics covered. Fifteen districts have provided numerous opportunities for their staff to attend training sessions. Staff development sessions provide a forum for exchanging information, experiences, and ideas among PASE staff in the district. These often have been initiated and conducted by district liaisons and other district resource specialists (e.g., early childhood coordinator, education specialist, teacher trainer). PASE staff meet weekly, monthly, or bimonthly. Topics addressed are often relevant to program activities: the development of students' communication skills, group guidance techniques, utilization of community resources, and early intervention strategies. Many schools have found it difficult to release staff (especially teachers assigned to self-contained classes) for sessions held at the district office. A few schools provide on-site training to these teachers by using their own staff or an outside organization (e.g., the Bank Street School for mathematics workshops, the Ackerman Institute for help with parent-teacher relationships). One of the most comprehensive examples of

in-service training is in C.S.D. 25, which held workshops weekly from September to January for all PASE teachers to help them implement a newly mandated district reading program.

Twenty-five districts provide in-service training to non-PASE staff. This has included grade-level workshops on classroom management techniques and development of sensitivity to the needs of mainstreamed at-risk children. PASE counselors in two districts are responsible for obtaining the cooperation and active involvement of key faculty members (e.g., supervisors, deans, and guidance counselors) to encourage the inclusion of PASE students in regular school activities. In most schools, PASE and non-PASE staff maintain regular communication on at least an informal basis. This is the most practical way for teachers of self-contained classes, who have limited preparation periods, to exchange information with one another on pupils' progress, to share materials, and to discuss management and discipline strategies.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

District Models

Most districts offered PASE activities similar to those provided in 1984-85. These can be grouped into three models: a largely guidance approach; the provision of an instructional program; and the development of a combined guidance and instruction program.* (See Table 5.)

Fewer districts are offering a combined guidance/instruction PASE program in 1985-86 (13 districts) than in 1984-85 (19 districts).

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*In 1984-85, a fourth model (health screening) was provided in C.S.D. 8.

TABLE 5

District PASE Models in 1984-85 and 1985-86

PASE Model	Number of Districts 1984-85	1985-86
Guidance only	8	12
Instruction only	4	7
Guidance and instruction	19	13
Health screening	1	0

Instead, more districts have chosen to offer just guidance (12 districts) or just instruction (seven districts). As a result, more districts are providing guidance (25 districts) in place of or in conjunction with instruction, than are providing instruction (20 districts). This is somewhat surprising, given the increased emphasis placed on including only P.S.E.N.-eligible children.

Within each of these three programmatic emphases, districts varied in their objectives, curriculum, instructional materials, staff development, and parent education and outreach. As a result, no attempt is made here to generalize about the relative effectiveness of the different approaches.

Services Planned for Students

Staff were asked to indicate on the O.E.A. roster what services were planned for PASE students. Plans were indicated for 9,168 (97.5 percent) of the students on the roster. Since most of this information was obtained in the early part of the program there is, of course, no guarantee that these are the services PASE students actually received.

Nonetheless, these data provide an indication of the substantial range of activities made available through PASE.

A majority of PASE students are expected to participate in at least two types of activities; more than half (5,846, or 63.8 percent) will be provided with multiple services. Guidance services are planned for more than two-thirds of the PASE students (6,481, or 70.7 percent). (See Table 6.) A similarly large proportion of students are expected to receive instruction in reading (66.8 percent). As a result, the combination of language arts instruction and guidance is the most frequent pairing of services; indeed, nearly half of the students in the program (4,098, or 44.7 percent) will receive both. Also, of the 5,850 students referred to PASE because of reading difficulties, nearly all (5,220, or 89.2 percent) will be given language arts instruction as part of PASE. Other services planned for PASE students, in addition to academic instruction and guidance, include health screening, cultural enrichment, career education or work study, and bilingual education.

Observations of Guidance Activities

O.E.A. staff observed guidance activities in 16 of the 25 districts that provide guidance activities through PASE. These observations are summarized below and in Table 7.

Guidance Counselors. In two-thirds of the districts where guidance sessions were observed, counselors appeared to relate well to PASE students; students often reciprocated with cooperation, respect, and even

TABLE 6

Services Planned for PASE Students

Planned Service	Number of Students for whom Planned Service was Indicated (N = 9,168)[a] n	(%)
Guidance services	6,481	(70.7)
Language arts instruction	6,121	(66.8)
Mathematics instruction	3,285	(35.8)
Health screening	2,323	(25.3)
Cultural enrichment	1,979	(21.6)
Career education/work study	1,944	(21.2)
Other academic instruction	1,499	(16.4)
Other services	1,385	(15.1)
English as a second language (E.S.L.)	611	(6.7)

[a] The services indicated in this table are those planned for students in December, 1985, at the time the O.E.A. roster was submitted. Students are expected to be provided with the following number of services: 3,322 (36.2 percent) - one service; 1,852 (20.2 percent) - two services; 1,067 (11.6 percent) - three services; 1,425 (15.5 percent) - four services; and 1,502 (16.4 percent) - five or more services. Service plans were unspecified for the other 187 students on the O.E.A. roster.

[b] Percentages do not total 100 because students receive more than one service.

TABLE 7

Observations of PASE Group Guidance Sessions

Observation	Number of Districts (N=16)	(%)
Counselor		
Relates well to students	11	(69)
Devotes full time to PASE	9	(56)
Plans and executes lessons effectively	8	(50)
Students		
Participate at least once a week	10	(63)
Appear to benefit from group guidance	8	(50)
Are actively involved/enthusiastic	7	(44)
Activity		
Topics relevant to students' needs	7	(44)

NOTE: Twenty-five districts conduct full guidance programs or combined guidance and instruction programs. O.E.A. field consultants were able to observe group guidance activities in 16 districts. Because of the importance of confidentiality in individual guidance sessions, observations were limited to group sessions.

affection. In more than half of the districts, counselors were assigned to PASE on a full-time basis. (Their assignments often included guidance-related responsibilities such as individual counseling, parent meetings, staff consultations, and program coordination.) In half of the districts, counselors effectively planned and executed group guidance lessons that were clearly focused, stimulating, and relevant to students' feelings and life experiences. Lessons in a few districts were poorly focused, lacked clearly defined objectives, and were poorly implemented.

Students. PASE students participated in group guidance activities on a regular weekly basis, in two-thirds of the districts. In other districts, some counselors were forced to reduce the frequency of group guidance sessions to accommodate other program and non-program responsibilities. Topics raised in group sessions were usually related to the specific needs of the at-risk population, many of whom have poor self-images, low academic achievement, immature behavior, or negative attitudes toward school. In a number of districts, discussions focused on more general guidance issues such as decision-making, problem-solving, and career awareness. Students appeared, in most districts, to benefit from the group guidance. Their comments during group guidance lessons or interviews indicated that many have made positive changes in their attitudes and behavior. Improved self-control, regular attendance, enjoyment of school work, and improved grades were also evident. Students often were actively involved in and enthusiastic about the topics under discussion; in a few districts, students were unresponsive and sometimes resistant to their counselors' efforts to generate meaningful dialogues.

Examples of District Guidance Activities

C.S.D. 20. Whole-class guidance lessons for PASE children in mainstream classes were held weekly. The focus of the observed lesson was on helping children, all of whom were from broken homes, deal with negative feelings and problematic behavior. Children were being helped to understand their feelings and to express them in more constructive ways. Working within mainstream classes has permitted PASE staff to avoid problems caused by pull-out type programs and to provide support to non-PASE teachers.

C.S.D. 19. A whole-class guidance lesson in a self-contained PASE class emphasized development of positive self-concepts and ways to improve interpersonal relationships. The itinerant PASE counselor used games to foster sharing and other social skills. He also arranged for and joined PASE classes on trips to places of interest and initiated a pen-pal program between students in participating PASE schools. The program has increased children's feelings of self-worth and has helped generate class pride.

C.S.D. 16. Small groups of PASE students participated in a Life Skills program taught by a family associate. The purpose of the program is to help students develop their skills in test-taking and following directions, and to improve their self-control and social maturity. The new curriculum is highly regarded by PASE staff. A school neighborhood worker coordinates all parent activities, including parent workshops and trips.

Observations of Instructional Activities

Instructional activities were observed by O.E.A. staff in all 20 districts which provide instruction in PASE. These observations are summarized below and in Table 8.

Teachers: In 85 percent of the districts, the observed lessons were well planned and executed by PASE teachers. Activities included individual tutoring as well as small-group and whole-class instruction. Observers described many teachers as skilled, enthusiastic, and innovative. They also established rapport with their students and showed a mutual respect for each others' opinions and judgments. About three-fourths of the PASE teachers are assigned full-time to PASE instruction, usually in self-contained PASE classes or, to a lesser extent, with pull-out groups of PASE students. Several middle school PASE teachers have been given additional non-PASE teaching responsibilities.

Approach. Forty-five percent of the districts providing instruction did so on an individual basis, sometimes with the help of PASE or non-PASE paraprofessional aides. Most children were taught in small groups, either on a pull-out basis or in small groups which met within self-contained PASE classes. In about half of the districts, teachers used a multisensory approach to teach reading and mathematics, which involves use of a variety of hands-on activities.

Program. In more than 70 percent of the districts, communication arts was central to their instructional programs. This included reading, writing, spelling, and speaking. Most of these districts stressed reading comprehension skills; fewer than half of the districts focused on

TABLE 8

Observations of PASE Instructional Sessions

Observation	Number of Districts (N=20)	(%)
Teacher		
Lessons well planned and executed	17	(85)
Has good rapport with students	17	(85)
Devotes full time to PASE	14	(70)
Students		
Perform well in class	19	(95)
Demonstrate good work habits	16	(80)
Appear highly motivated	15	(75)
Approach		
Small-group instruction	14	(70)
Instruction is individualized	9	(45)
Multi-sensory approach	9	(45)
Program		
Communication arts emphasized	14	(70)
Reading comprehension emphasized	13	(65)
Program highly structured	9	(45)
Phonics emphasized	8	(40)
All curriculum areas covered	6	(30)
Enrichment activities provided	4	(20)
Test-taking skills emphasized	3	(15)
Curriculum and Materials		
Teacher uses a wide variety of instructional materials	10	(50)
District developed/mandated curriculum	6	(30)
All curriculum areas covered	6	(30)

NOTE: Twenty districts conduct instructional programs or combined guidance and instructional programs. O.E.A. field consultants were able to observe instruction in all of these districts.

phonics; a few districts emphasized test-taking skills (e.g., the cloze format) in preparation for the new city-wide reading test, the Degrees of Reading Power. Instruction was usually provided by teachers in self-contained classes, although students often were departmentalized for subjects other than language arts and mathematics. Enrichment activities (e.g., music, art, dance, computers) were found in 20 percent of the districts which provide instruction.

Curriculum and Materials. Half of the districts supply a wide variety of materials to their PASE classrooms. However, there were shortages of books and materials in some districts, due primarily to ordering or delivery delays. In one-third of the districts, teachers used district-developed curricula and/or materials. In these districts, programs were often monitored closely by district staff and sometimes included staff training. About one-third of the districts covered all areas of the curriculum, while other districts concentrated their efforts exclusively on reading or mathematics. From a holistic standpoint, an all-inclusive curriculum offered the advantage of better control of the program by the PASE teachers. On the other hand, students were provided fewer opportunities to participate in mainstream activities.

Examples of District Instructional Activities

C.S.D. 21. Intensive reading instruction in all subject areas was provided for small groups of children pulled from their regular elementary and junior high school classes. The effectiveness of this program was greatly enhanced by regularly scheduled lunch-time meetings between PASE and non-PASE teachers, during which remediation needs and strategies

were planned. Also, the district developed a successful peer-tutoring program, where ten junior high school PASE students tutor ten elementary school students.

C.S.D. 25. A new highly structured language arts program, the Orton-Gillingham approach to the teaching of reading, writing, spelling and comprehension, was used in this early-intervention program for PASE students. Small groups of children who lack pre-reading skills or who function below grade level received daily instruction in a developmental multi-sensory phonics program. Principals have been very supportive during the implementation of this new program.

C.S.D. 6. Community associates and PASE teachers provide an integrated program of guidance and instruction for PASE children and their families. Working under the supervision of non-PASE counselors, bilingual community associates helped families who recently immigrated from the Dominican Republic resolve multiple social and health problems. They also provided individualized help to PASE children through small-group instruction in language arts. Conferences with PASE children and their parents are scheduled regularly.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Parent involvement and community outreach are major components of PASE in 19 of the 32 school districts. Parent outreach strategies varied among districts, and parents' responsiveness was frequently a direct result of the skills and dedication of the counselor or teacher. Typically, guidance counselors or program teachers contacted parents for

individual conferences, meetings, and parent workshops. Ongoing communication between students' homes and school was maintained by telephone, letters, flyers, and newsletters. Weekly report cards were sent in some districts to keep parents informed about their child's progress. In one district, a parent handbook was compiled by PASE teachers for distribution to parents; it contained strategies suggested for use with children during the summer months. Strong parent interest was evident in another district which sent Parent Advisory Council (PAC) representatives to visit all funded programs.

Outreach usually was more successful when school neighborhood workers, social workers, or bilingual community associates were part of or available to the PASE staff. They arranged appointments for families with mental or physical health services and, in some cases, accompanied parents and students to the agencies. A guidance support team in one district met with students and parents and made referrals for needed services, and the school neighborhood worker arranged for trips, picnics, and parent education workshops. Another district maintained a learning center in the district office which was available on appointment to parents and their children.

Parent participation in 12 school districts was hampered by several constraints, including the mobility of hotel families, poor English skills of immigrant parents, and unavailability of working parents. In a number of districts, because PASE staff did not consider parent involvement to be a priority, they abandoned efforts to communicate with parents after the failure of initial attempts to arouse interest.

In spite of well organized outreach efforts by PASE staff in many districts, significant numbers of parents failed to respond to or participate in parent workshops and meetings.

A wide variety of community resources have been used by PASE staff. Referrals have been made to after-school programs, tutorial services, scouting organizations, youth and counseling centers, hospital clinics, and social agencies.

COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Responsibility for coordinating PASE with other programs was usually shared on the school level by the principal and the PASE guidance counselor or other key member of the PASE staff. Usually this involved informal consultations between PASE and non-PASE staff. Student progress and alternative pupil placements were frequent topics in these discussions.

On the district level, the district liaison was responsible for coordinating PASE. The degree of coordination varied from district to district; in three districts, principals indicated that their PASE staff received no help from the district office. Liaisons in other districts were assisted by district personnel (e.g., deputy superintendent, pupil personnel director, guidance supervisor, or director of funded programs). Two districts used a PASE-funded project coordinator who served as the field liaison to participating schools. Coordination responsibilities included preparing and training PASE staff, organizing program review meetings, sharing information about community resources, ordering and distributing materials, and coordinating PASE with other compensatory programs.

Supervision on the school level was the sole responsibility of the principal in 44 percent of the districts; otherwise, this responsibility was shared by the principal with the assistant principal or other designee, or was carried out by district-level staff. The supervision usually included formal or informal observations, consultations, and monitoring of PASE activities. School administrators generally were very supportive of PASE in their schools.

PASE students took part in school-wide activities and supplementary services in varying degrees. In eighty percent of the districts some of the PASE students were assigned to other support services and programs not available in PASE and/or which enhanced the achievement of PASE goals, including Chapter I/P.S.E.N., PEG (Prevention in the Early Grades), drug abuse prevention programs (e.g., C.S.D. 27's ASPECTS 27 and the police department's S.P.E.C.D.A. program), and A.I.D.P. (Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention). PASE students also took part in after-school activities, including recreational and tutorial programs, field trips, and special interest clubs (e.g., art, gospel choir).

Relationships between PASE and non-PASE staff were reported to be very good in 85 percent of the districts. PASE staff provided training to classroom teachers in behavior modification and classroom management, and counselors were available as resource people to all faculty members. In most districts, interaction between PASE and non-PASE staff was ongoing and considered to be a positive feature of the program.

III. CHANGES IN REFERRALS, AND PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PASE

CHANGES IN SCHOOL REFERRAL RATES

Type of Data

General education students referred to S.B.S.T./C.O.H. for their first special education assessment are known as initial referrals. Most initial referrals are made by members of the school staff; these are termed school referrals. Referrals are also initiated from other sources, such as the student's parents (parent referral), community agencies (other referrals), or students themselves (self or other referrals). Referral rate analyses reported here were performed only on school referrals, since these are the referrals over which the school is believed to have some control.

The bulk of the referral data presented in this report was supplied by C.O.H. chairpersons to the Office of Management Services of D.S.E. (O.E.A. obtained referral data from C.O.H. offices for a few schools when the information was not available centrally.) These preliminary data represent the six-month period from September through February of school years 1984-85 and 1985-86. All schools reported by district liaisons to be in the 1985-86 program were included in the analyses. The final 1985-86 O.E.A. report on PASE will update these statistics with March through June referral data for all schools in the program.

Changes in School Referrals

Table 9 contains initial school referral data for each of the 32 community school districts. The rate of referral decreased in 25 of these districts, remained the same in one, and increased in the other

TABLE 9

Initial S.B.S.T./C.O.H. Referrals Made by Staff in PASE Schools, in 1984-85 and 1985-86

	Referrals by School Staff[a]					
	1984-85			1985-86		
District	Register[b]	n	(%)[c]	Register[b]	n	(%)[c]
1	9,668	113	(1.2)	9,936	202	(2.0)
2	3,908	208	(5.3)	3,834	168	(4.4)
3	3,122	95	(3.0)	3,231	98	(3.0)
4	1,930	54	(2.8)	1,883	49	(2.6)
5	1,486	2	(0.1)	1,577	7	(0.4)
6	7,619	66	(0.9)	7,587	83	(1.1)
7	4,376	177	(4.0)	4,503	109	(2.4)
8	4,851	63	(1.3)	4,753	56	(1.2)
9	3,947	54	(1.4)	4,242	30	(0.7)
10	24,338	511	(2.1)	25,921	667	(2.6)
11	7,865	170	(2.2)	7,966	164	(2.1)
12	4,622	107	(2.3)	4,620	58	(1.3)
13	3,334	50	(1.5)	3,132	5	(0.2)
14	3,385	24	(0.7)	3,419	20	(0.6)
15	6,612	201	(3.0)	6,459	141	(2.2)
16	8,054	123	(1.5)	8,279	186	(2.2)
17	23,122	230	(1.0)	25,894	244	(0.9)
18	8,293	135	(1.6)	7,619	146	(1.9)
19	2,916	64	(2.2)	3,200	49	(1.5)
20	13,920	330	(2.4)	14,165	290	(2.0)
21	4,562	129	(2.8)	4,421	83	(1.9)
22	9,029	171	(1.9)	9,189	154	(1.7)
23	1,218	52	(4.3)	1,193	10	(0.8)
24	7,851	255	(3.2)	8,033	207	(2.6)
25	13,083	367	(2.8)	13,539	312	(2.3)
26	10,554	219	(2.1)	10,893	168	(1.5)
27	13,208	414	(3.1)	13,338	240	(1.8)
28	9,924	392	(4.0)	10,109	216	(2.1)
29	14,255	382	(2.7)	14,409	250	(1.7)
30	12,170	406	(3.3)	12,290	274	(2.2)
31	6,601	38	(0.6)	6,332	53	(0.8)
32	10,477	298	(2.8)	10,687	137	(1.3)
Total	260,300	5,900	(2.3)	266,653	4,876	(1.8)

[a] These preliminary data include only referrals made from September through February.

[b] These are the audited registers from October of each school year and include only those schools with a 1985-86 PASE program.

[c] These percentages are based on the participating schools' registers.

six. Staff in PASE schools made a total of 4,876 referrals (1.8 percent of their schools' populations) from September, 1985 to February, 1986, a net decrease of 1,024 referrals from the 5,900 (2.3 percent) made during the same period the prior school year. The decrease reflects an overall reduction in referrals of 17.4 percent. Referrals in 207 of the PASE schools (60.7 percent), decreased 18 schools (5.3 percent), remained the same, and increased 116 schools (34.0 percent).*

It is not appropriate to compare this decrease with the 20.7 percent decline reported in the 1984-85 interim evaluation report, since the same schools did not participate both years. In addition, as noted in the final O.E.A. 1984-85 report, rates of special education referrals in PASE schools may plateau after the program has operated successfully for more than one year. To check this tendency, an additional analysis was conducted to compare changes in referrals in PASE schools new to the program in 1985-86 with those of schools participating for a second year.

Of the 351 schools in this year's program, 77 were first-year schools. A similar proportion of students in new schools (1.9 percent) was referred in 1985-86, compared with old schools (1.8 percent). (See Table 10.) However, the extent of decline was much larger in new schools than in old schools: the 381 fewer referrals in new schools reflects an overall decline of 28.3 percent; the 643 fewer referrals in old

*Changes in referrals are reported for 341 schools, not the 351 reported in Table 1. This was done to conform with C.O.H. referral reports which usually combine data from mini-schools and annexes with the school as a whole.

TABLE 10

Comparisons of Referrals in Old and New PASE Schools

	Second-year schools (n=274)	First-year schools (n=77)
1984-85 School Register	210,661	49,639
1985-86 School Register	215,912	50,741
Number Referred 1984-85	4,540	1,346
Number Referred 1985-86	3,897	965
Percent Referred 1984-85	2.2	2.7
Percent Referred 1985-86	1.8	1.9
Change in Referrals 1984-85/ 1985-86	-643	-381
Percent Change in Referrals from 1984-85 to 1985-86	-14.2	-28.3

schools reflects an overall decliine of 14.2 percent. Referral rate decreaselhas slowed in schools participating for the second year.

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PASE

The apparent impact of PASE is not limited to reduced referrals. Program and non-program staff were asked to indicate the major accomplishments of PASE in their districts. They reported that:

- PASE students' reading skills have improved (19 districts);
- students' attitudes toward school have improved (15 districts);
- students have better work habits and study skills (15 districts);
- students' behavior has improved (16 districts); and
- students grew in self-esteem and improved their self-image (14 districts).

Other accomplishments that were mentioned with less frequency included: better parent/child relationships (three districts), reduced suspensions (two districts), and better attendance (one district).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Observations of district PASE efforts and interviews with PASE school principals, staff, students, and district liaisons permit several conclusions. This chapter discusses the general factors that are associated with successful PASE programs, factors that limited the impact of the program, and several recommendations aimed at program improvement. The report concludes with a discussion of the philosophy that underlies this program and a rationale for its expansion.

POSITIVE FACTORS

Four general factors were evident in districts which reported success with their PASE students. These are: high quality staff, supportive leadership from the district and school administration, program designs that were sensitive to local needs and resources, and a focus on the individual child. These are discussed in detail below.

Program Staff

Clearly, the high quality of program staff was the feature most commonly associated with program success both in districts with guidance and in those with instructional PASE programs. Principals and other school staff interviewed in 63 percent of the districts indicated that program staff members were experienced, well trained, resourceful, and well organized; established good relationships with school personnel; and employed effective strategies for meeting the program's goals. PASE staff organized as teams were particularly effective; they functioned as a cohesive unit able to interact with many school personnel and to

be responsive to the varied needs of their district's target population.

A number of districts benefited by the designation of one PASE staff member as coordinator of the program. This person often provided direct services on an itinerant basis to students in many of the district's schools and had first-hand knowledge of schools' needs. In addition, the coordinator often provided strong leadership and served as a bridge between PASE schools' staff and administration, the district liaison, and off-site community agencies.

District and School Leadership and Support

The district liaison provided consistent, frequent support to the program in almost one-half of the districts. Programs were enhanced by the district liaison's involvement. This often included monitoring program activities, planning and conducting in-service training, and facilitating access to district and community resource specialists. District liaisons were fully funded by PASE in three districts and partially funded in seven other districts. As a rule, however, most district liaisons had multiple, non-PASE responsibilities that precluded their active involvement. Conflicting responsibilities was often a problem, but not in those districts that designated a field program coordinator.

School administrators' active involvement in and commitment to the program contributed to PASE activities in at least 23 districts. Their involvement often enhanced school staff members' perceptions of the importance and worth of the program. It also meant that additional resources frequently were made available, including assistance from

tax-levy paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, and social workers. Involved, committed school administrators ensured that PASE was fully integrated into the school, that space was available for program staff, and that instructional materials were supplied. In a few schools, principals' interventions were critical to resolution of difficulties encountered by program staff.

Program Design and Strategies

Certain designs and strategies appeared to contribute to successful PASE programs. One of these is the use of PASE funds to supplement programs in alternative schools. Often these schools were designed for carefully selected students, many of whom were at risk of referral or suspension; others provided more intimately scaled subschools with lower staff:child ratios. The at-risk population in one district using the alternative school design was fully integrated in all school activities and benefited from a wide variety of course offerings.

Another model received favorably by many schools involved use of itinerant teams that provided concentrated services in short cycles during the school year. The team approach enabled program staff to focus their combined talents and energies on students, teachers, and parents.

Districts with well balanced guidance/instructional designs were better organized to respond to the wide range of problems presented by at-risk children than were programs which provided strictly guidance or instruction. The guidance and instruction model provided many children and their families appropriate and needed services. Itinerant

guidance counselors working in this model provided effective coordination and leadership to the program; this function frequently was absent in districts with purely instructional models.

Instructional paraprofessionals were an important resource provided by several districts. A few districts hired bilingual community associates to work under the supervision of tax-levy guidance counselors. These associates were able to provide a liaison between the school, home, and community. Their involvement proved to be an effective means of addressing the social, emotional, health, and family needs of many at-risk children from language minority homes.

Focus on the Individual Child

PASE provided a reasonable alternative for many children who could not function successfully in large-register mainstream classes. Thirteen districts did an exceptional job of devising programs with an individualized focus. Several approaches were used:

- Individual and small-group instruction and/or guidance was provided on a regularly scheduled basis. Staff included: an educational assistant, who worked with one to four limited English proficient (LEP) children to correct specific language deficiencies; and a guidance counselor, who met with parents and children individually or in small groups for counseling and discussion.
- Teachers used a system to distribute rewards, based on documented classroom success. (In one district, each pupil was responsible for maintaining his or her own progress chart). These rewards were used in conjunction with guidance and instruction that were designed to develop students' self-awareness, self-esteem, and sense of responsibility for their own actions.

- A holistic approach involved use of several PASE staff (e.g., teachers, community associates, family assistants, and guidance counselors) to identify, evaluate, and remediate the multiple problems faced by PASE children and their families.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS

Selection of Target Population

The use of the P.S.E.N. academic requirement was too restrictive, according to many PASE staff and principals. Its effect was to eliminate from consideration children whose reading and/or mathematics scores were above the 24th percentile test cutoff, yet who were otherwise at risk of a referral to special education. Guidance counselors, especially, expressed concerns about students whose behavior interfered with their overall learning but who did not fall below standardized cut-off scores.

Two districts did not target an at-risk population. Both used PASE funds to supplement small alternative schools whose programs are preventive and where potentially at-risk students' educational and psychological needs are met. This was clearly the situation in one of the districts where a high quality program was observed and referrals to S.B.S.T./C.O.H. were non-existent in PASE schools. In the other district, however, O.E.A. staff were not permitted to make observations, except in one subschool which actually served a gifted student population (in apparent conflict with state P.S.E.N. and city D.S.E. guidelines).

A considerable proportion of at-risk children in about one-half of the districts were not able to participate in PASE because of a variety of factors including: not enough staff; selection of schools with only

a small number of students who meet the district's guidelines; inclusion of only a few of the district's schools; and focus on second year PASE students thereby limiting new enrollment.

Site and Grade-Level Selection

D.S.E. program guidelines clearly indicated that districts were to target elementary schools for PASE. (D.S.E. memorandum of July 17, 1986: "Emphasis should be on elementary schools with high referrals to Special Education.") However, 14 districts included all or some of their middle schools in PASE; in several cases, these were districts which specified reduced suspensions as a goal of their program. While alternatives to suspension are certainly desirable, it is not clear that focusing on middle schools, to the exclusion of elementary schools, is justifiable for that reason.

Staff

Staff vacancies were reported in nearly one-half of the districts. The main reasons for these were: substantial changes in program design from 1984-85; delays in approval of the district's proposal; difficulties filling certain positions (especially social workers and bilingual guidance counselors); and staff members' unwillingness to work undesirable program hours (e.g., after school).

Size of Caseload

Target populations in some districts were too large for the assigned PASE staff. Inefficient use of program staff diminished the quality of services, especially in districts where staff had multiple site assignments, schools had split sessions, or where PASE schools had large

numbers of at-risk students. PASE staff were often burdened with additional non-PASE responsibilities; part-time conselors given full-time responsibilities (e.g., individual and group guidance, crisis intervention, screening of referrals, and parent outreach) were especially strained.

Staff Development

Staff development was absent or inadequate in six districts, often because the district made little or no effort to provide it. In one district, this had a profound effect on the program in observed schools. PASE staff frequently mentioned their desire to share strategies and exchange ideas with their counterparts in other schools, especially within their own district.

Approaches

Principals in four of the seven districts that focus exclusively on instruction reported that many PASE students need guidance and counseling. In two districts, PASE focused on students with aggressive or anti-social behavior, rather than on those with academic deficits; brief periods of isolation in in-school suspension classes achieved the district's immediate goal of reducing out-of-school suspensions. It is unclear, however, to what extent this program strategy addresses the PASE goal of reducing inappropriate referrals to special education.

District Liaison

The multiple roles of most district liaisons limited the time they could devote to PASE activities. Fortunately, this situation did not appear to have a negative impact on PASE in most districts, especially

since some assigned a PASE staff member as program coordinator. In a few districts, principals and program staff complained about vagueness in district guidelines and inadequate staff orientation and training provided by the district liaison. Often, PASE teachers in these districts felt "rudderless," left to chart their own course when specifying program goals or selecting materials.

Space

Work and storage space were a serious impediment to program operations in at least five districts. This was especially problematic in districts where PASE staff are itinerant and have multiple school assignments. While the reality of overcrowded schools requires that the program adapt to these conditions, districts must continue in their efforts to find solutions. (One district used "adequate space for PASE" as a precondition for schools' participation in the program.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings discussed in this report warrant a number of specific recommendations which are aimed at program improvement. These fall into four general categories: student selection, program administration, staffing, and services.

Student Selection

- The program should be expanded to include a larger proportion of the at-risk population.
- All districts should target elementary school at-risk students. If all at-risk students in lower grades can be served and additional PASE resources and staff are available, middle-school students at risk of a referral to special education should be included.

- Students should be identifiable by name so that their progress can be monitored.

- Students who are not P.S.E.N.-eligible, but who are at risk of referral to special education, should be targeted for inclusion in the program.

Program Administration

- District PASE funds should be provided as two separate allocations: a P.S.E.N. allocation, for providing services for P.S.E.N.-eligible students; and a tax-levy allocation, for providing services to students regardless of their P.S.E.N. eligibility. These should be treated as separate programs for allocation purposes, but as a single program for administrative purposes.

- The program should be structured in a manner that will ensure serving non-P.S.E.N. eligible students at risk of referral to special education as well as those who meet P.S.E.N. guidelines.

- Districts need to provide for adequate program coordination and supervision. Program evaluation suggests that a minimum of one half-time position is necessary to ensure sufficient administration including: interpreting central and district guidelines for program staff; determining staff-development needs; arranging for training; ordering and distributing materials; encouraging parents' involvement; and establishing better linkages with community agencies.

Staffing

- Staff members' interest in working in PASE next year should be determined before the close of the school year. Recruitment for any vacancies should begin early in the fall term, especially for titles often difficult to fill (e.g., community associates, bilingual guidance counselor).

- The use of part-time staff who have other responsibilities competing for their time should be minimized, except when integral to a successful program model (e.g., an after-school program).

- Split and itinerant assignments should be discouraged, except under the following conditions: the number of schools is low (preferably only two); another PASE staff member is based at the school on an ongoing basis, and the itinerant person is needed for additional support or specific expertise (e.g., training, parent workshop, crisis intervention); and storage space is provided.

- Training should be provided to program staff. Districts need to devise strategies that will enable classroom teachers to attend such sessions.

- Staff caseloads should not be excessive. Staff:student ratios should reflect both the type of service and amount of time required to provide it, as well as take into account the incidence of need in the district.

- PASE coordinators and staff should redouble their efforts to coordinate existing services with other district support programs, resource staff, and community agencies. Districts can help increase the impact of the program by assigning additional (tax-levy) staff to it.

Services

- Guidance should be available to all PASE students, especially those for whom academic difficulties were only one of the reasons for referral.

- A full panoply of PASE services should be provided for a limited duration of time (depending on students' needs and progress); these services can include the following: diagnosis of learning difficulties, individual/group counseling, instruction in reading, writing and mathematics, parent education, home visits, community agency liaison, and assessment of student progress. Appropriate follow-up should be provided after services are terminated to monitor and facilitate student progress in regular education program.

- Districts using PASE funds to provide in-school suspension programs should review the goals of PASE and reconsider what longer-term interventions can be provided to meet the needs of at-risk students.

APPENDIX

Reports on Community School Districts' Program Alternatives to Special Education

The 32 individual district reports contained in this appendix are based on visits to a sample of program sites; observations of program activities; and interviews with administrators, staff, and students. A few explanations are in order. Information about which schools are in the program was provided by district liaisons. The number of students referred in the program throughout the district comes from Table 1 of this report and reflects both the number of students identified on the O.E.A. roster as well as any additional students reported by the district liaison to be in the program. The numbers of students participating in visited schools are current as of the O.E.A. site visits (January through March, 1986) and were provided either by school principals or program staff. When the number of school participants was in apparent conflict with the number reported in an entire district, O.E.A. staff attempted to reconcile the discrepancy; this was not always possible, however. District data on 1984-85 and 1985-86 referrals to special education are for the September to February period of the school year and include only initial school referrals. (In the 1984-85 O.E.A. interim report, total referrals were reported, since school referrals were not available.)